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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Claim 1. An article of footwear comprising:
a sole;
a substantially non-extensible upper;
an elastic element surrounding a heel area of the upper; and
said upper further comprising a heel portion, said heel portion being at least partially extensible.

Claim 2. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein an entirety of said heel portion of said upper is constituted by an extensible material.

Claim 3. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper extends upwardly to an upper edge of said upper.

Claim 4. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper has a height of at least 20% of said upper along at least a substantially vertical line.

Claim 5. An article of footwear according to claim 4, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper has a length of at least 10 millimeters along at least a substantially horizontal line.

Claim 6. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper has a length of at least 10 millimeters along at least a substantially horizontal line.

Claim 7. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper is made of an elastic material.

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Claim 8. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper comprises an inside covered with an adhesive material.

Claim 9. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said extensible heel portion of said upper comprises an inside covered with PU, PVC, or silicone.

Claim 10. An article of footwear according to one of claims 1-9, wherein said elastic element is a strap extending downwardly and forwardly from a rear end of said heel area.

Claim 11. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said elastic element is a shell completely surrounding said heel area.

Claim 12. An article of footwear according to claim 11, wherein said shell includes a lining made of a moisture absorbing material.

Claim 13. An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein the article of footwear is a climbing shoe having a form-fitting upper.

Claim 14. A climbing shoe comprising:

a sole;

an upper, said upper comprising a front portion and a rear portion, said front and rear portions having a junction at an area corresponding to an ankle of a wearer of the shoe;

at least said front portion of said upper comprising a substantially non-extensible construction;

at least a part of said rear portion of said upper being constructed to be extensible; and

an elastic strap member to apply a force to a foot of the wearer of the shoe forwardly, said elastic strap member extending around surrounding a heel area of the upper and extending forwardly and downwardly from a rear of said upper on each of opposite sides of said upper.

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Claim 15. A climbing shoe according to claim 14, wherein:
said junction of said front and rear portions of said upper comprises at least one line of stitching extending upwardly from said sole.

Claim 16. A climbing shoe according to claim 15, wherein:
forward of said junction line said front portion of said upper is made of a non-extensible material and rearward of said junction line said rear portion is made of a substantially extensible material.

Claim 17. A climbing shoe according to claim 14, wherein:
said junction of said front and rear portions of said upper comprises at least one line of stitching extending upwardly from said sole on each of opposite sides of said upper.

Claim 18. A climbing shoe according to claim 14, wherein:
said rear portion of said upper includes, on opposite sides of said upper, rearward of said junction, a pair of opposite elastic portions, said elastic portions of said rear portion extending downwardly from opposite upper edges of said upper.

Claim 19. A climbing shoe according to claim 18, wherein:
said elastic portions of said rear portion extend downwardly from said upper edges of said upper at least about 20% of a distance between said sole and said upper edges of said upper.

Claim 20. A climbing shoe according to claim 19, wherein:
said elastic portions of said rear portion have a width extending in a front-to-rear direction, at least at an upper end of said elastic portions, of at least about 10 millimeters.

Claim 21. A climbing shoe according to claim 14, wherein:
said shoe is a slipper and said front and rear portions of said upper are form-fitting and flexible.